

Professional Standards Advisory Board Meeting

March 10, 2010 10am

Minutes

The March 10, 2010 meeting of the Professional Standards Advisory Board was called to order by Jason Woebkenberg at 10:04 a.m. Mr. McEwen, Ms. Billman, Dr. Johnstone and Ms. Riehl were not in attendance. Mr. Holt arrived after the meeting began. Mr. Woebkenberg led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance. Following the Pledge, Mr. Woebkenberg asked if the board had reviewed the minutes from the January 7, 2010 meeting and if there was a motion to approve. Dr. Cate-Clements asked for clarification of the discussion summarized in the minutes about the requirement for educators to renew licenses with a professional growth plan (PGP) and whether 6 semester hours of coursework is a renewal option in addition to the PGP or only as part of a PGP. Dr. Cate-Clements' recollection was that coursework used for renewal must be translated into professional growth points and incorporated into a PGP. Mr. Mapes stated it is an option that coursework can be incorporated into a PGP and that the staff would double check to ensure the minutes accurately reflect the rule language. Dr. Cate-Clements also pointed out that the second reference to "institutional report" in the last paragraph on page 2 should say "annual report." Dr. Van Horn took issue with the minutes referring to an internal inconsistency in the REPA concerning how applicants can add new content areas. Dr. Van Horn didn't believe there was an inconsistency, but there was a difference of opinion among members. He asked that the sentence referring to the internal inconsistency be deleted. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2010 meeting with corrections. The motion passed.

The board moved into new business. Mr. Woebkenberg noted that the first item on the agenda, Update on REPA, was being moved to last place. The next item, information on basic skills testing, was introduced by Mr. Mapes who noted that public comment was received suggesting there should be other means besides Praxis I for teacher preparation programs to measure and document basic skills proficiency for candidates. Dr. Mast's presentation was to provide information about alternatives to Praxis I that the board might want to consider in the future. Dr. Mast began by presenting a chart showing alternatives used by other states. Two states (CT,VT) use established scores on SAT, ACT and GRE as proof of basic skills proficiency; two states (LA,WV) use SAT and ACT scores and exempt applicants who have earned a master's degree from a regionally accredited institution; two states (DE,MD) use SAT and GRE scores; two states (TN,NC) use SAT and ACT scores. Four states (AK, ME, MD, NC) allow a composite score for Praxis I that allows applicants to balance a lower score in one section with a higher score in another section. Dr. Mast noted that the ACT exam includes sections testing English, reading, math and science, with an optional writing section. The average ACT composite score last year was 21.1. The highest score possible on the ACT is 36. The SAT was redesigned in 2005 and includes math, critical reading and writing sections, each worth 800 points. If the board wanted to establish a score for the SAT, it would need to consider what to do with applicants who took the pre-2005 version of the test.

Dr. Mast handed out studies conducted by ETS that correlate the SAT and GRE exams to the PPST/Praxis I basic skills test. The question was asked if there is a comparable study showing the correlation between the ACT and the PPST/Praxis I. Dr. Mast indicated that the ACT and PPST are "owned" by different vendors and she was not aware of a correlation study. Dr. Van Horn asked Dr. Mast to find out if there is such a study.

Dr. Mast directed the board's attention to a handout listing the 2010 passing scores for all states using the Praxis I PPST exams. On the PPST mathematics exam the states' scores range from 169 to 178, with Indiana requiring a passing score of 175; the states' scores on the PPST reading exam range from 170 to 178, with Indiana's score set at 176; the range of scores for the PPST writing test is 170 to 176, with Indiana's score set at 172. Dr. Mast also presented a chart showing the number of test takers nationally and in Indiana over several years, the mean and median scores, and number and

percent passing. The next information presented was “Test at a Glance” information about each of the three PPST exams. Dr. Cate-Clements asked if there is a difference in passing percentage between applicants taking the test on paper and those taking the computer version. Ms. Bosworth from ETS indicated that the computer-based test has a slightly higher pass rate. The question was asked whether ETS still provides a diagnostic evaluation for unsuccessful test-takers. Ms. Bosworth said that service was discontinued due to very little use, but that test-takers can ask for a rescore of their test. Dr. Mast then presented a document showing a statistical analysis of national data for number of test-takers and percent passing at each score interval. This information is helpful in gauging the impact of making a change in a cut score.

Mr. Mapes then asked the board’s opinion of allowing applicants who already hold advanced degrees (masters and higher) to be exempt from re-proving their basic skills for licensure purposes and whether the board wanted the OELD staff to bring recommendations to a future meeting for SAT, ACT and GRE scores to be accepted as evidence of basic skills proficiency. Dr. Van Horn commented that he hopes an individual who has completed a bachelor’s degree has shown basic skills proficiency, too. Dr. Van Horn asked if the board needed to revisit or reconfirm the Praxis I cut scores before approving a composite score or correlated scores for ACT, SAT and/or GRE to use as alternative measures. Dr. Mast said a confirmation of Indiana’s scores would be a good idea and it could be done in conjunction with approving scores on correlated tests. Dr. Van Horn asked if Dr. Mast knew what correlative data other states might have considered prior to approving the ACT as an alternative to Praxis I and if it might be possible to see it. Dr. Van Horn asked how the states on the hand out were selected; Dr. Mast indicated she had looked at the state DOE websites of all 50 states and the ones noted in the handout were the ones that listed alternatives to Praxis I PPST. Dr. Van Horn commented that he knows, because his daughter is in school in Ohio, that Ohio allows an alternative and it is not noted on the handout. Ms. Bosworth explained that Ohio allows each of its approved institutions to set its own teacher education program admission requirements, but it does not prescribe specific alternatives or scores. Ms. Bosworth also noted that Wisconsin also allows its higher education institutions to select alternatives. Mr. Mapes offered that the OELD staff would make inquiries to get more information. Dr. Van Horn asked if Indiana currently uses a composite score or individual scores on each PPST exam. Dr. Mast explained that Indiana uses the individual scores and so the board would be looking at correlations for each of the PPST exams.

Mr. Fronius commented that he came to education as a ‘career changer’ and that he did not find the Praxis exams overly difficult, expensive, onerous, or a barrier to entering education. However, he wonders if at some point test scores become “stale.” Should an applicant be able to rely on an SAT score from 1960 to prove present day basic skills proficiency? Ms. Bosworth noted that five years seems to be the accepted “shelf life” of test scores. Mr. Fronius noted that an SAT score that is only five years old doesn’t reflect a “career changer” since the SAT would have typically been taken the year before a person entered a 4-year bachelor’s program. These are all things the board would need to consider when it addresses the topic of alternatives for Praxis I in the future.

Mr. Wuebkenberg closed the discussion and introduced the next item of business: state accreditation status report for Indiana’s teacher preparation institutions. Dr. Mast explained that state accreditation status is reviewed through documentation annually; NCATE conducts on-site visits for NCATE-accredited institutions every seven years. The state accreditation process is under review and has not been finalized. When asked when there would be guidance available on the new state accreditation process, Dr. Mast explained that the existing accreditation process will continue until a new process is developed and that no institutions are currently due for a state accreditation visit. There are only two institutions in Indiana that are not NCATE accredited: Earlham and Notre Dame. Three other institutions are currently establishing themselves; of those, Vincennes University and Indiana Tech are interested in being NCATE accredited, and Holy Cross is looking at state accreditation only. Additionally, Calumet College Saint Joseph recently expressed its intention to seek NCATE accreditation.

Dr. Cate-Clements pointed out a typographical error on a date on the second page. Dr. Van Horn asked what “UAS” meant in reference to University of Phoenix. Dr. Mast explained that UAS means Unit Assessment System. The University of Phoenix came to the Professional Standards Board before Dr. Mast joined OELD and used a “Unit Assessment System” to document its program and meet state accreditation requirements. This accreditation applies only to the brick and mortar U of Phoenix facilities, not the online programs. Dr. Bennett asked if the board needed to approve the list and Mr. Mapes said yes. Dr. Van Horn asked what it means for them to approve the list. Clarification was given that all the annual accreditation reports submitted by the institutions have been reviewed and the approval acknowledges the current accreditation status of all the institutions. This information will be posted on our website for the public. Mr. Woebkenberg asked if the board was ready to vote. A final question was asked clarifying the at-risk status for Anderson University’s advanced program. Mr. Woebkenberg asked for a motion. A motion was made and seconded to approve the list of institutions and their state accreditation status. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Woebkenberg asked Mr. Mapes to introduce the next agenda item. Mr. Mapes explained that legislation was passed that requires the DOE to establish standards for sign language interpreters. Becky Bowman, DOE General Counsel, was introduced to give the board some background as to why these standards are necessary and explain what action she was requesting from the board. Ms. Bowman explained that she needed the board’s approval to initiate rule making and she introduced Joan McCormick from the Indiana Council of Administrators of Special Education (ICASE) to explain the need for standards for sign language interpreters in the educational setting and what work has already been completed toward these standards. Interpreters in the educational setting need to understand content and be able to paraphrase and explain concepts to students—not teach, but paraphrase—to help them comprehend. Interpreters in other settings are required to interpret only the exact words that are spoken. A committee has been working on this project for several years, so updating and completing standards for the rule making process should not take much time. The standards will result in a certification, not a license, for interpreting. There are many people currently working as interpreters in the educational setting (such as parents of deaf students) who will be grandfathered, but unless sign language interpreter standards for the educational setting are promulgated, by law those individuals will be required to meet the standards for interpreters in non-educational settings as of July 1, 2011. Dr. Van Horn explained that if the board does not promulgate standards it will create a shortage of interpreters to assist students in schools and cause great financial impact on school districts. Mr. Holt pointed out that by law the board must adopt the standards, so inaction is not an option. Dr. Van Horn moved approval for the department to move forward with the rule promulgation process. Dr. Cate- Clements seconded the motion; it passed unanimously.

Mr. Woebkenberg moved to the last agenda item, update on REPA. He complimented the Frequently Asked Questions document that is posted on the OELD website and was sent out to superintendents and principals. Mr. Mapes noted that it was developed using real questions from the field and gave kudos to staff members Risa Regnier, Katie Russo and Marg Mast for putting it together. Mr. Mapes explained that following a lot of staff work, the REPA document was submitted to the Attorney General’s office on February 8, 2010; the AG has 45 days to review and approve the rule and then it goes to the Governor for review and signature. He stated that there is confusion about when REPA becomes effective; some people think since REPA was approved by the board on January 7th that it’s already in effect. He asked board members and the audience to help communicate that the rule won’t become effective until after the review and approval by the AG and the Governor are complete. He noted that the staff conducted a web-ex with higher education institutions and licensing advisors in February to answer questions about REPA and that it went well. Discussion ensued about the FAQ with comments that the options for renewing licenses need to be revisited in the document and the effective date of the pedagogy test needed to be corrected. Also, questions were asked about how the teachers would track and report professional development for their professional growth plans. Mr. Mapes responded that it is our intent to have an application on the Learning Connection that teachers can use to report and track their PGP activities and through which building administrators can verify those activities.

Mr. Mapes moved on to the discussion of 4 questions that were sent in advance to board members for their reactions. The first question is: How do we recognize great teachers and principals? Should that be something the board recognizes (officially acknowledges)? Dr. Goodwin wanted to know for what purpose they would recognize great teachers. Mr. Mapes responded it would be for job purposes, to tell employers that a teacher is among the “best.” Ms. Wilson stated she would expect that to appear on a resume, not on a license. Board members commented that using the growth model it will be possible to identify and designate good teachers. Mr. Holt asked about the opposite situation: what about the teacher who’s horrible and who lingers on and moves from school corporation to school corporation, probably with a nice letter of recommendation each time. How can the state end the situation where districts are afraid of confrontation with the teachers’ union over getting rid of bad teachers, or so afraid of law suits that they keep bad teachers? Dr. Goodwin responded that if we really implement the growth model, then keeping ineffective teachers will stop over time. Dr. Van Horn added that he doesn’t think the state should be stepping in and telling districts who to keep and who to get rid of; it’s the local district’s responsibility to remove ineffective teachers. Dr. Van Horn noted that his school district has an effective process for removing ineffective teachers and the union is supportive. Maybe the state should research what districts have effective processes and make those available around the state. Dr. Bennett remarked that he has recently been involved in technical assistance meetings with school leaders in failing schools and when asked how many teachers in their districts should actually be teaching students, the answer was about 25%. When asked why they hadn’t been removed based on evaluations, those leaders said teachers had not been evaluated. Dr. Bennett said he feels morally responsible to take action: if someone can’t do the job we should not give them access to children.

Mr. Mapes moved on to the next questions: 1) What standard should teacher prep programs be held accountable for once student results can be linked to teachers and preparation programs? 2) Should license renewal requirements utilize growth model results as a condition for renewal? 3) Should the professional standards board take action against license holders whose schools are taken over because of poor performance? Ms. Koehler expressed concern that there are teaching situations where achieving student growth will be much more challenging, regardless of how good a teacher you are; student demographics are a critical factor. Ms. Salyers agreed, and commented that once the initial anxiety and concern about the growth model dies down and teachers get used to using it, she hopes the growth model will weed out some ineffective teachers. She thinks the growth model should be used for a while before results are tied to licensure and job retention. Mr. Woebkenberg agreed and expressed concern about getting good teachers to teach in challenging high need schools when the specter of having their licenses revoked due to lack of student growth is hanging over their heads. He has been fortunate to be an administrator in high needs schools where teachers with seniority could have transferred to any other school building yet chose to stay in the school where the demographics were the most challenging and where student growth was happening but didn’t show up clearly on standardized tests.

Dr. Bennett responded that he didn’t want to walk on people who are already teachers. First, he would like to see a list of “best to worst” teacher preparation programs based on student results; in his opinion higher education isn’t held accountable in the same way K-12 education is held accountable. We have to step out and start “doing” and stop just talking. Dr. Bennett showed the board press clippings about Governor Orr’s and Dean Evans’ A+ program from 1987 that pointed out the graduation rate was 80%; 23 years later our graduation rate is 81.5%. We’ve gotten no better. We have to stop finding reasons not to do good things and find more reasons to do them. We need to hold everyone accountable and not just talk about it. Dean Evans proposed the creation of the Professional Standards Board to increase teacher professionalism and accountability. Where would we be today if the reforms in the A+ program had been fully implemented?

Mr. Woebkenberg closed the discussion. Mr. Mapes asked the board if April 22 is still a good date for most of the board members. The board agreed it is. Mr. Woebkenberg asked for a motion to adjourn. Dr. Bennett moved to adjourn and Mr. Holt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.